

To the Members of the California State Senate:

I am returning Senate Bill 1356 without my signature.

Suicide prevention is an important and serious issue that is appropriately an area of focus of the Mental Health Services Act and the Department of Mental Health's work. Specifically, the Act sets forth reducing suicides as a goal of state and local early intervention programs funded by the Act, and makes significant resources available for prevention and early intervention activities, including initiatives to address suicide prevention. In addition, my 2005-06 and 2006-07 budgets provided funding for the Department of Mental Health to undertake suicide prevention activities and provide support for local suicide prevention efforts.

I agree with the goal of SB 1356 to provide a plan to better coordinate state and local suicide prevention efforts. Given the requirements of the Act and the efforts already underway, the goals of this bill can best be addressed administratively, and do not require a statutory mandate. Therefore, I am directing the Department and the Health and Human Services Agency to build on the work done by the California Suicide Prevention Advocacy Network and coordinate with all interested constituency groups and state and local agencies in the development of a statewide strategic plan on suicide prevention no later than May 1, 2008.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger